

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 CU-04 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 L-03

NSC-10 PA-03 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15 NIC-01 OMB-01 SY-10

AID-20 PC-04 OPR-02 RSR-01 /150 W

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0471

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 3768

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS

SUBJECT: GOG AUGMENTS TEACHERS' WAGE PACKAGE, STRIKE ENDS

REF: GUATEMALA 3711, A-161

SUMMARY: PUBLIC SCHOOLTEACHERS' STRIKE REMAINED EFFECTIVE THROUGH WEEK OF JULY 30-AUGUST 3 AND APPEARED TO BE GATHERING WIDER, MORE EFFECTIVE SUPPORT. IN RESPONSE, PRESIDENT ARANA MET WITH TEACHERS' LEADERS (FNM) EVENING AUGUST 3 AND AGREED TO AUGMENT WAGE PACKAGE ANNOUNCED JULY 16. FNM UNDERSTANDS NEW LEVEL IS 25 PERCENT INCREASE IT PROPOSED TO GOG JULY 26. FNM ACCEPTED GOG'S NEW POSITION, CALLED FOR END TO STRIKE, BUT ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO PROCEED WITH AUGUST 7 MARCH PROTESTING INCREASES IN COST OF LIVING. END SUMMARY.

1. DESPITE GOG THREAT TO CANCEL WAGES FOR JULY OF ALL TEACHERS NOT WORKING BY JULY 31, PUBLIC SCHOOLTEACHERS' STRIKE WHICH BEGAN JULY 17 REMAINED EFFECTIVE IN CAPITAL AND OTHER MAJOR CITIES THROUGH WEEK OF JULY 30. STRIKE ALSO APPEARED TO GATHER MORE EFFECTIVE AND WIDER SUPPORT AMONG STUDENTS AT SAN CARLOS UNIVERSITY (USC) AS WELL AS AMONG LABOR UNIONS. IN FACE OF THIS SOLID RESISTENCE, CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESIDENT ARANA MET WITH FNM LEADERS EVENING OF AUGUST 3

FOR NEARLY 2 HOURS AND OFFERED TO READJUST WAGE PACKAGE TO MAXIMIZE PAY RAISE AT COST OF NEW FRINGE BENEFITS. ARANA DECLARED THAT INCREASE WOULD BE FUNDED WITHIN Q5.5 MILLION LEVEL PREVIOUSLY EARMARKED FOR TEACHERS' PAY RAISE. FNM UNDERSTANDS THAT NEW GOG POSITION WILL MEAN 25 PERCENT PAY RAISE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLTEACHERS.

2. FNM IMMEDIATELY HELD MASS MEETING AT USC CAMPUS WHERE STRIKING TEACHERS ACCEPTED 25 PERCENT PAY RAISE. FNM ANNOUNCED CLASSES WOULD BEGIN AUGUST 6 BUT CONDITIONED RETURN TO WORK ON RELEASE OF ALL TEACHERS AND STUDENTS DETAINED BY POLICE DURING PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS. FNM AND STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION (AEU) ALSO ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO PROCEED WITH AUGUST 7 MARCH TO PROTEST INCREASES IN COST OF LIVING. GOG HAS AUTHORIZED THIS MARCH, BUT ONLY IF HELD OUTSIDE DOWNTOWN AREA.

COMMENT: EFFECTIVE RESISTENCE BY TEACHERS TO GOG'S MULTIPLE ATTEMPTS TO BREAK STRIKE PLUS WIDENING OF SUPPORT WAS KEY TO TEACHERS' SUCCESS. GOG STRATEGY OF HOLDING LINE AT 10 PERCENT WAGE INCREASE AND ATTEMPTION TO SCARE TEACHERS BACK TO WORK FAILED AND HAS GIVEN RISE TO THE INEVITABLE CHARGES OF "WEAKNESS" IN THE GUATEMALAN RUMOR MILL. GRANTING LARGER PAY INCREASE WAS SURELY THE WISEST COURSE TO FOLLOW IN TEACHERS' AFFAIR SINCE IT QUICKLY ENDED POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE SITUATION. HOWEVER, WITH GOVERNMENTAL "MACHISMO" NOW CALLED INTO QUESTION IN LOCAL POLITICAL CIRCLES, THE GOG MAY FIND ITSELF INCREASINGLY SUBJECT TO ATTACK ON WAGE AND PRICE ISSUE FROM ALL FRONTS IN THE MONTHS TO COME.
BOWDLER

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